



NESTON
HIGH SCHOOL

Headteacher's report to Trustees

Spring Term 2025

CONTENTS

	Page number
Behavioural reports	1
Attendance	2
Curriculum Development update	4
Disadvantaged	5
Sixth Form update	6
Teaching and Learning update	9
Health and Safety	10
Health and Safety future planning	11
IT Update	12
Staff wellbeing	13
Staff Absence	14
STEM	15
Literacy	15



BEHAVIOURAL REPORTS

Number of suspensions occasions

	Totals 2018- 2019	Totals 2019- 2020*	Totals 2020 - 2021♦	Totals 2021 - 2022	Totals 2022 - 2023	Totals 2023 - 2024	Autumn 2024	Spring 1 2025	Spring 1 2024	Difference
Year 7	7	1	20	3	11	5	2	9	1	+8
Year 8	3	9	8	28	13	24	6	4	3	+1
Year 9	18	11	17	31	64	46	11	18	10	+8
Year 10	13	22	27	37	31	62	24	15	9	+5
Year 11	19	16	39	7	19	35	31	19	5	+14
Year 12	0	0	0	4	1	3	0	0	0	0
Year 13	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	60	59	111	111	140	175	74	65	28	+37
Total Number of Days	73	152	206	310.5	243.5	255.5	116.5	60.5	48	+12.5
Total Number of students	46	43	66	96	87	82	47	42	24	+18

*Includes the period of school closure from March – August 2020

♦Includes the period of school closure from January – March 2021

Number of Permanent Exclusions

1 permanent exclusion in October 2019

1 permanent exclusion in May 2021

2 permanent exclusions in May 2022

1 permanent exclusion in January 2023

1 permanent exclusion in October 2023

1 permanent exclusion in October 2024

2 x pending March 2025

As of 7th March, attendance is currently at 92.4%, reflecting the impact of structured early intervention, clear graduated approaches and a newly implemented policy. This marks a 0.5% increase at Neston compared to last year, demonstrating the effectiveness of targeted strategies in improving student presence.

Neston's attendance is approximately in the top third of all schools nationally. The current figure is 0.6% higher than the national average, further reinforcing the success of a proactive and structured approach to attendance management.

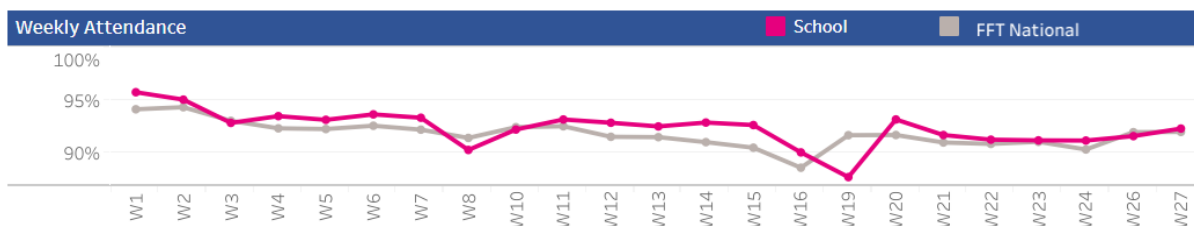
A key strength has been the support for students with additional needs. Attendance for those receiving SEND support is 3.6% above the national average, while EHCP students attend at a rate 7.1% higher than their peers nationally. These improvements highlight the school's commitment to inclusive and supportive practices, ensuring all students benefit from a structured and well-monitored attendance system.

The attendance of Pupil Premium students, with a particular focus on females, remains a key area for intervention, with targeted strategies being developed to provide additional support and improve engagement within this cohort.

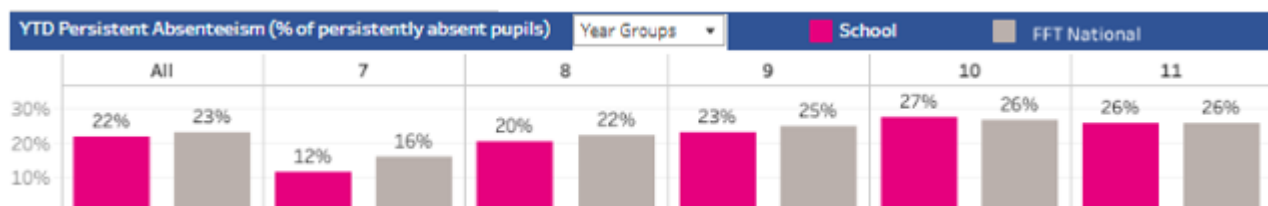
Ongoing actions in place to secure continued improvements in attendance:

- **Enhancing Rewards for Attendance** – Additional rewards will be introduced to further incentivise and celebrate strong attendance. This will build on the existing provision, ensuring students feel recognised and motivated to attend regularly. Students have regularly been involved in Attendance assemblies, reward events and had certificates sent home.
- **Expanding the Local Schools Attendance Hub** – The current collaboration with local schools focusing on attendance will be expanded, allowing for a broader sharing of best practices, resources and intervention strategies. This is in its infancy, with an initial meeting being held. The school will work on strengthening these partnerships that will help improve attendance across the wider community.
- **Restructuring Early Absence Intervention** – A review will take place to assess how the school responds to the first few days of absence, ensuring early intervention is as effective as possible. This may include refining contact procedures, engagement strategies and support for students returning to school.
- **Promoting Attendance Through Displays and Social Media** – The school will increase its promotion of attendance through visible displays around the site and regular social media posts. This will reinforce key messages for students, parents and the wider community about the importance of regular attendance.
- **Designated Attendance Meetings** – Structured meetings are embedded into the school's calendar fortnightly. Pastoral Learning Mentors and Head of Years will be focusing on completing fifteen parental attendance every fortnight between them. These meetings will ensure accountability and drive targeted action.
- **Strengthening the Tracker System and Quality Assuring Early Interventions** – The current Tracker system will be further developed to provide even greater insight into attendance patterns. Alongside this, early intervention processes will be quality assured to ensure consistency and effectiveness across all year groups.
- **Targeted Support Meetings with the Local Authority** – Biannual meetings with the Local Authority will be used to discuss attendance concerns, identify patterns, and access additional resources or interventions to support students who are struggling with attendance.
- **Researched Plan for Engaging Pupil Premium Students and Females** – A targeted approach will be developed to address concerns around attendance within the Pupil Premium cohort,

particularly among females. This will involve research into effective engagement strategies and tailored interventions to remove barriers to attendance.



Attendance breakdown				Year To Date						02 Sep 24	-	07 Mar 25
Pupil Groups		Pupils		All	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11			
All	All	1,508	School	92.3%	95.2%	93.4%	91.5%	91.2%	90.4%			
			FFT National	91.7%	94.2%	92.3%	91.2%	90.6%	90.3%			
			Difference	+0.6%	+1.0%	+1.2%	+0.2%	+0.6%	+0.2%			
Gender	Female	685	School	91.3%	95.1%	92.5%	90.2%	90.1%	88.3%			
			FFT National	91.4%	94.4%	92.1%	90.7%	90.0%	89.7%			
			Difference	-0.1%	+0.7%	+0.4%	-0.5%	+0.1%	-1.4%			
	Male	823	School	93.2%	95.3%	94.2%	92.4%	92.1%	92.3%			
			FFT National	92.0%	94.0%	92.4%	91.7%	91.2%	90.9%			
			Difference	+1.2%	+1.2%	+1.8%	+0.7%	+0.9%	+1.4%			
FSM6	FSM6	262	School	85.7%	91.6%	88.1%	83.5%	84.0%	82.2%			
			FFT National	86.8%	90.9%	87.7%	85.9%	84.8%	84.0%			
			Difference	-1.0%	+0.7%	+0.4%	-2.4%	-0.7%	-1.8%			
	Not FSM6	1,246	School	93.7%	96.0%	94.2%	93.2%	92.9%	92.3%			
			FFT National	93.6%	95.6%	94.1%	93.3%	92.7%	92.5%			
			Difference	+0.1%	+0.4%	+0.1%	-0.1%	+0.2%	-0.2%			
SEND	Support	199	School	90.3%	94.6%	94.6%	90.4%	86.2%	85.5%			
			FFT National	86.7%	91.3%	87.6%	85.5%	84.2%	83.8%			
			Difference	+3.6%	+3.3%	+6.9%	+4.9%	+2.0%	+1.7%			
	EHCP	60	School	89.3%	89.6%	96.7%	81.5%	87.1%	92.5%			
			FFT National	82.2%	87.5%	84.0%	81.3%	79.1%	78.1%			
			Difference	+7.1%	+2.0%	+12.6%	+0.2%	+8.0%	+14.4%			
Not SEN	Not SEN	1,249	School	92.8%	95.6%	93.1%	92.1%	92.0%	91.2%			
			FFT National	93.0%	95.1%	93.5%	92.7%	92.1%	91.8%			
			Difference	-0.2%	+0.5%	-0.4%	-0.6%	-0.1%	-0.6%			



QA Process

From September 2024, our internal QA process has been developed to build upon the foundations of our QA window undertaken in the last academic year. This involves a calendared week for every department, with SLT joining departmental leadership to conduct a thorough review of departmental practice.

The purpose of these QA Departmental Developmental reviews has been to establish a consistency of standards and practice across all departmental areas of Neston High School. To provide Curriculum areas with a clear understanding of areas of best practice, areas of development and necessary actions for departmental development.

Reviews have included:

1. SLT meeting to establish departmental developmental priorities
2. Departmental data review
3. Curriculum conversation including discussion of intent, implementation and impact
4. Compelling learning experience- Teaching and Learning, behaviour and attitudes review
5. Assessment review
6. Books/Record of learning reviews
7. Provision for focus groups review (SEND, more able, Disadvantaged)
8. KS5 provision review (where applicable)
9. Student voice
10. Staff voice
11. Overall findings

Within each area of the report areas of strength, areas of development and necessary actions have been identified.

Following the completion of the reviews Curriculum Leaders have received feedback meetings with Kirsty Cunningham and Kieran Smith to discuss their feedback report in depth. This has then been followed by Line Management meetings which have prioritised the development of identified necessary actions. Curriculum Leaders are then meeting with Kieran Smith and Fiona Mannix to discuss next steps they have and continue to undertake.

The completion of these reviews has allowed SLT to identify whole school strengths and areas for development, allowing for direction of departmental and individual CPD. As well as helping to influence whole school Teaching and Learning and Curriculum priorities. The school SIP is booked to come in and QA our systems and check department improvements are being made, as well as leading Ofsted training.

Progress data for non-PP and PP cohorts in the year 2025 show the gap to be narrower at this point in the year compared to 2024 at this time. Outcomes in 2024 saw the Progress 8 gap decrease from -0.48 to -0.35. At this point in the year the gap from the Spring PPG data in 2024 was -0.29 whilst currently the Spring PPG data 2025 shows a gap of 0.19.

Education Endowment Foundation's recommended strategies to narrow the gap between Pupil premium students and Non-pupil premium students includes quality first teaching. This benefits both disadvantaged students and non-disadvantaged students. Having completed the SSAT programme in 2024, we continue to embed the strategies which enable teachers to develop formative assessment strategies and identify gaps in student learning. The introduction of Step Lab (an online training programme) provides bespoke CPD training for staff to support their training needs.

The literacy intervention programme continues for Year 7 students, strategically targeting those identified as disadvantaged. As a school we are committed to fostering a comprehensive reading culture across the entire school continues. An explicit teaching approach to Tier 3 vocabulary has been adopted across all key stages and curriculum areas.

MADE revision sessions have been systematically delivered to students in Years 10-13 to support their preparation for examinations. This initiative has been used successfully for a couple of years

Specialised metacognition and exam preparation sessions have been specifically tailored for Year 11 PP students in anticipation of their impending examinations.

The Year 7 summer camp will continue this year during activities week, featuring offerings from an external provider such as rock climbing, problem-solving, and outdoor cooking. Access to these activities will target PP students, underlining an intensified push for inclusive extracurricular experiences. Vigilant tracking and improvement of PP attendance at extracurricular clubs continue to be focal points.

Beyond these initiatives, a comprehensive support system has been implemented for PP students in Years 10-13, involving SLT mentoring sessions post-CAE exams. The objective is to understand individual student needs and respond effectively, which may include the provision of laptops, revision guides, pencil cases, and tailored adjustments to timetables. To address underperformance, additional parental meetings have been organised for PP students.

Departments have a designated PP champion, who track underperforming PP students. Data tracking is employed to identify PP students underachieving across multiple areas, paving the way for targeted, student-specific interventions.

The Sixth Form team have been working hard to ensure that progress is being made towards the school development plan targets of 'To improve progress and standards in the Sixth Form'.

Our year 13 cohort are currently working at an Average grade of a C, male students are currently C and female are at a C based upon current teachers predicted grades provided after the recent mock examinations in January. We are coming to an end of a series of data meetings, where each department KS5 data is reviewed with senior staff and actions are decided upon for both departments and the Sixth Form team to ensure the best outcomes for students. Students performed well in their January mocks scoring an average grade of a C- with both genders achieving the same average grade. We are confident that with the January exam results still to come into school, coursework to be finalised and a final push towards the summer exam series, students have a good chance of achieving in line with the predicted grade of a C.

The Sixth Form team have worked hard to try and ensure that students adopt the 'A-Level Mindset'. Study logs are used for students who need additional monitoring, file and folder allow staff to monitor students work on a regular basis.

This year we have seen 67 students apply through UCAS (67% of the year group), 4 of these applying as early applications to ensure places on courses such as medicine and dentistry. Our previous cohort saw 93 students apply through UCAS but from a larger year group (72% of the year). This year students in year 12 have been taken to Edge Hill University to gain an experience of Campus University as well as the UCAS discovery day (previously the UCAS conference) to offer students the opportunity to speak with over 80 universities and a further 30 Apprenticeship providers. We are currently planning a visit to The University of Liverpool to visit a Russel Group University and a visit to Magdalene College at The University of Cambridge for a group of year 12 students. We have continued to work with The Pledge Wirral to offer a programme of support for our students looking at access the apprenticeship market. This year's programme has been expanded to included sessions on the use of LinkedIn when finding apprenticeships as well as the previously ran sessions including Interview preparation, CV writing, attending a mock assessment center and careers fair events.

The team have a focus on students' academic performance and have coordinated a number of activities throughout the year in order to ensure students continue to progress. Students test scores and attitude to learning data is monitored and feeds into regularly data meetings with department leads. Students have attended study skills workshop and bespoke intervention programs to ensure they have the required skill set to be successful at A level. The heads of year led on parent meetings to ensure all stakeholders are involved in conversations regarding students progress and suitable support is in place at home. Timetables are amended to increase time with teachers when required, and all students in year 13 have been assigned and attended two SLT mentoring session to discuss progress and future plans.

Attendance

The efforts of both Head of Year 12 and Year 13 have led to an improved level of Sixth Form attendance. Regular attendance meetings, letters, phone calls and parent meetings are put in place quickly to ensure students return to their learning after absence. Year 12 Attendance is 93.5% (above the national average of 91.7%), year 13 attendance is 92.2% (National average is 91.7%). Sixth Form attendance as a whole is now at 92.9% (an improvement on the 92.3% previously reported), Sixth Form attendance is 0.5% above the Arbor national average and marginally higher than lower school. The team are continuing to strive towards our target of 95%.

Recruitment Update

This year we have 179 Internal applicants to join the Sixth Form with an additional 10 external students. The number of external students who have applied has risen throughout the year and now stands at 20 (a rise of 4 students from last year). Each external family who has declared an interest has been offered a visit to the school. The number of internal students applying in November has remained consistent year on year with 179 applying this year in comparison to 175 last year. Of the 179 internal applications received in November, 167 have stated Neston is their first-choice destination. 147 of these first-choice applications are on track to meet the basic entry requirements of 5 grades 4-9. 105 of the first-choice applications are on track to meet the more demanding requirements of 5 grades 5-9. These numbers have remained consistent with the previous predicted grades from teachers in the Autumn term. Efforts have been made to ensure that the courses on offer are suitable for our year 11 cohort. A full curriculum comparison has been completed for the next academic year with our local competition and we are adding an Applied ICT course which will start for the new intake of year 12 students in September. The recent addition of Criminology and law has benefited our recruitment and data reviews suggest that the grades should be strong for the first cohort of students through the course criminology course this summer.

The most popular courses with are applicants are Criminology, History, Geography, Maths and Law.

We are currently in the process of analysing student responses to finalise option blocks which will be released to families after consultation with staff on Monday 17th March. The final stages of our recruitment will be each applicant attending an interview by a member of the Sixth Form team or SLT to discuss the suitability of the courses selected, progress towards the entry requirements and final preparations towards their summer exams.

Other activities

As well as their academic studies sixth form students have been involved in a number of other initiatives around school. Sixth Form students are involved in mentoring lower school students each morning. Around 30 students work closely with year 7 students to improve their reading. Another 20 students work with lower school maths students to help improve their numeracy skills. A further 8 act as pastoral mentors for lower school students who need additional peer support and guidance. Sixth Form students have been involved in a number of charity events including putting on a Christmas dinner for some of the elderly members of the Neston community. Students have had the opportunity to participate in a number of social events to reward them for their hard work, including a Christmas movie night held in school.

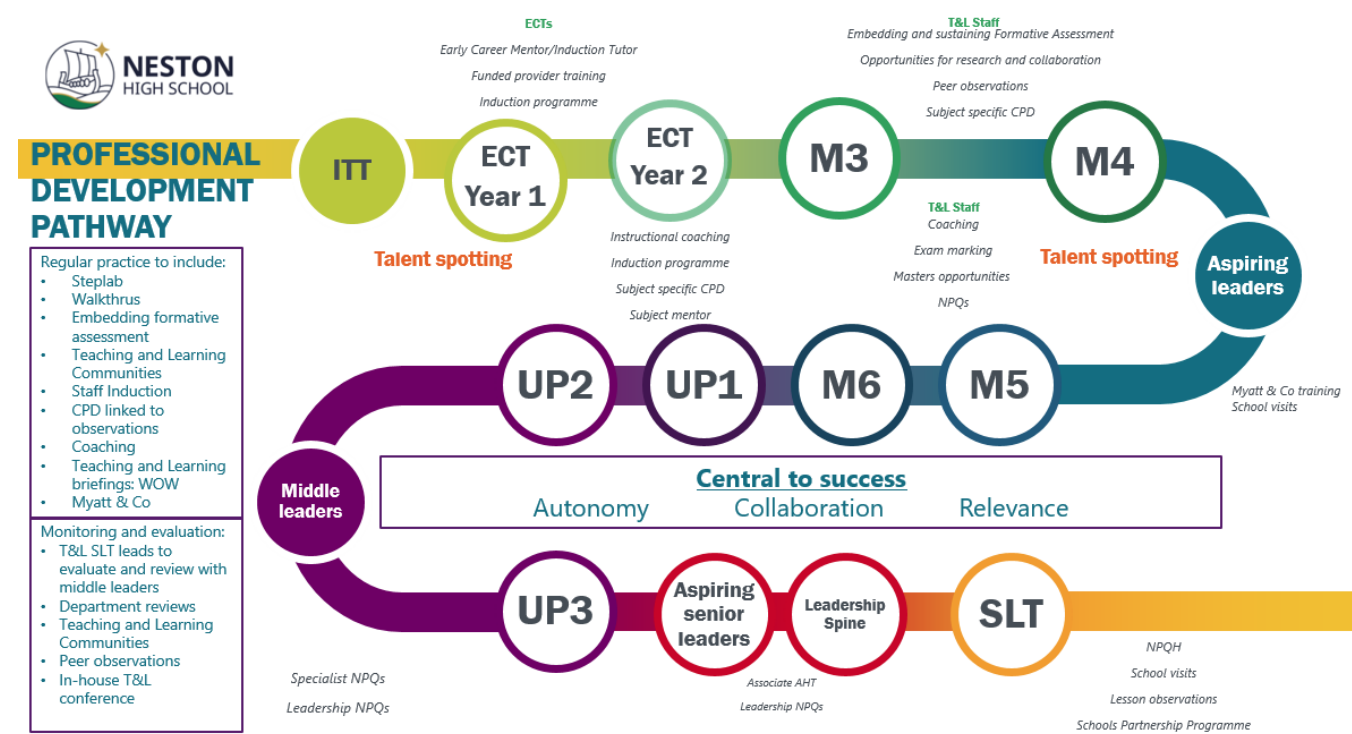
Update of the year so far-

- Enrolment day for new year 12 students
- Year 12 Parents information evening
- Huddersfield University outreach and admission tutor- personal statement checking day x2
- Year 13 SLT mentoring day- round 1
- Year 13 Progress Event
- Social Mobility Foundation Applications
- Bursary applications
- Year 13 Parents meeting day-MRO
- Apprenticeship- Parents Information Evening
- Medics and Me Support
- Year 12 In class assessment week
- Year 13 CAE week

- Employment Readiness Program in school PHSE sessions
- UCAS Early Application Deadline students (medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, Oxford or Cambridge)
- EPQ launch for y12
- Sixth Form Showcase
- Sixth Form Open Evening
- Year 11 Application Process launch
- Year 12 Work Experience Launch
- TEFL course for year 12 students
- Departmental Data meetings
- Students Interview prep 1-1s
- Past year 13 certificate collection morning
- RSL Parent Meetings
- UCAS deadline
- Year 12 Progress Event
- Apprenticeship and Jobs Fair trip
- Mock Assessment Centre Trip
- Sixth Form Social Events
- Enrichment PSHE
- Year 12 SLT Mentoring Event
- Edge Hill University Visit
- UCAS conference Visit
- Oxbridge Assemblies

This term we have introduced Steplab, a platform for enhancing Professional Development (PD) for our teaching staff. Steplab offers a structured framework for continuous growth, allowing teachers to engage in collaborative learning, share best practices, and refine their teaching strategies. At present all teaching staff are using this by accessing the library materials which are an excellent resource and mean that CPD can be bespoke to meet needs of all staff. This also includes access to the Walkthrus programme so that all materials are in one place. By providing tailored professional learning opportunities, Steplab and Walkthrus encourage staff to reflect on their teaching methods, trial new approaches, and receive feedback from peers. This will not only empower teachers to improve their skills, but also foster a culture of ongoing development and support, ultimately benefiting both teachers and students alike. In addition we are using Steplab for positive affirmations for staff with 'shout outs' for all staff to see to celebrate good practice in teaching and learning.

Weekly briefings now include a focus on adaptive teaching. This is essential because it ensures that all students, regardless of their learning styles or abilities, receive the support they need to succeed. Adaptive teaching involves adjusting lessons, activities, and assessments to accommodate the diverse needs of students, whether they require additional challenges, support, or different methods of instruction. By recognising that every student learns differently, adaptive teaching promotes inclusivity and helps prevent students from falling behind. It fosters a more engaging and dynamic classroom environment where every learner is given the opportunity to reach their full potential, making it a crucial approach.



Accident/Incident/Near Miss reporting

Accidents reported since the last report are summarised on the table below.

There has been no formal reporting of any 'near misses' since the last report. This is still an area with potential for further development in our H&S culture so that we can be more pro-active by evaluating the circumstances of near misses, adjusting wherever reasonably practicable, to reduce the likelihood of these occurring before harm or loss is experienced.

A recent recommendation made by our new safety consultants was to provide incentives to encourage more staff to report near misses which is being considered.

Staff are still doing some of the above by other means and in general conversations but not via the formal reporting process where progress with these could be recorded, followed up, monitored and successes recognised by all stakeholders.

Service Desk reported Accidents/Incidents/Near Misses						
Date	Type	Who	Year	Location	Description	Any follow up actions
December						
19.12.24	Minor	Student	8	Corridor	Pushed into a locker by a student	no
January						
06.01.25	Minor	Student	10	Science	Copper Sulphate splash in eyes	no
29.01.25	Minor	Student	11	3G	Dislocated knee during football match	no
February						
05.02.25	Minor	Student	11	Art	Needle into finger. Minimal bleed	no
March						
10.03.25	Minor	Student		Science	Chemical splash in eyes	additional eyewash station

Improved Vehicle and Pedestrian segregation

There are thousands of daily pedestrian and vehicle movements at the front of the site every day and several concerns regarding safety and access within these areas have been reported into school from various sources and over a considerable period.

Following careful analysis of these reports, all movements, access needs for all and car park capacities, an adjustment has now been implemented to change slightly the route that students take home at the end of the school day. The gate between the School and Recreation Centre is no longer in use at the end of the day and remains closed. Instead, all students with good mobility now all make their way down through the playground behind the Recreation Centre (thereby completely away from vehicles) and they can remain on a footpath when walking home without crossing any traffic as they leave the site either onto Raby Park Rd or Hawkins Rd. Students have responded well by adhering to this change and many of the concerns raised have been addressed for all users.

Accessibility

Due to the above adjustment, all students with good mobility exit the playground by the two gates near the 2G pitch. This has meant that the car park nearest to the front of school is no longer the nearest point to collect students, so the 10 disabled parking spaces and access road by them is less desirable for misuse. This whole area is now proving much more accessible to those with a genuine need to collect students with long- or short-term mobility needs nearest to and from the front of school. The Neston community can also now access to and from the Recreation Centre entrance at the end of the school day without the risks associated with cutting across over a thousand students either crossing the entrance or congregating there.

Since the last Trustee meeting we have engaged with a Compliance Education to support the school with Health & Safety.

Compliance Education offer:

- A full Health & Safety Audit to ensure legal compliance and advise on best practice.
- Regular monthly visits
- 24 hour helpline
- EVC support including risk assessment guidance
- A qualified person to fulfil the role of 'competent person'
- Health and safety policy advice
- Conduct a Fire Risk Assessment
- Conduct Risk Assessments covering employee activities including manual handling, working at height.
- Conduct Risk Assessments of Equipment, Grounds and Premises
- Conduct COSHH Risk Assessments of all substances used within the school.
- Display screen equipment
- Lone Worker Risk Assessments, work related stress risk assessments, new and expectant mothers risk assessments
- Assist with Lockdown Procedures and Lockdown drills
- Assist with accident investigation and support with liability claims and
- Write your School Emergency Management Plans
- Complete Security Audits
- Complete Disability Access Audits
- Assist with PEEPS
- Provide Individual Pupil Risk Assessments
- Complete Due diligence Health & Safety Audits
- Provide Internal Health & Safety Scrutiny reports for Governing Bodies
- Provide our EVOLVE System with dedicated trip approval
- Complete food hygiene audits
- Evaluate the schools' health and safety training needs and provide training in areas where appropriate i.e. fire awareness/marshall, asbestos awareness, manual handling and risk assessment, paediatric first aid, food hygiene, working at height and COSHH.
- Provide Health & Safety eLearning packages
- Monitor health and safety requirements on a regular basis improving the culture and increase awareness of health and safety.

Our Health and Safety Adviser visited a couple of weeks ago and is conducting an audit that covers both compliance and a review of processes and procedures. The full report will be shared with Trustees when it is available.

New IT Equipment Installed

We have installed new computers in IT Suite 221 to keep our technology up to date. This is part of an ongoing plan rolling program to replace older equipment regularly.

Preparing for Windows 10 End-of-Life

Microsoft will stop supporting Windows 10 in October, so we are making sure that all critical systems and IT suites are ready for Windows 11. We have accelerated some of next year's rolling program refresh plans into this financial year to ensure all mission critical systems, devices, and IT-Rich computer suites to be compatible ahead of the sun setting date in October 2025. Most of our devices will be compatible, but some older laptops—especially those provided by the Department for Education (DfE) during COVID—won't be. There is no funding from the DfE to replace these, so we are discussing budget options with the business and finance manager.

External Security Audit/Review.

We previously engaged our external auditors, Redambler, for a cybersecurity review. Their report confirmed that our IT systems and security measures are robust, with no major areas of concern. However, upon reflection, we felt the review was somewhat high-level.

To ensure a more comprehensive assessment, we have decided to commission a dedicated IT firm specialising in cybersecurity for a deeper, more detailed review. While we have no reason to doubt the findings of the initial audit, we believe this additional step is important given the rapidly evolving IT landscape. The recent incident at a local high school further reinforces the need for heightened diligence in this area. This in-depth review is scheduled for the Easter half-term, and we will share the findings with trustees once the report is complete.

Ongoing Cybersecurity Training

Last year's mandatory online cyber training (required by the DfE) has been completed and is now part of the onboarding process for new staff.

Cybersecurity is constantly evolving, and we want to ensure that staff remain aware of the latest risks—not just in school but also in their daily lives. To strengthen our human defenses against cyber threats, we would still like to introduce short, easy-to-follow online training sessions throughout the year (6 x 20 minute 'bite-site' training modules – 1 every half term).

These sessions would complement the annual DfE mandated training and help keep cybersecurity top of mind. The training portal is already in place and are awaiting confirmation of allocated CPD time to facilitate the distribution of this supplementary training.

Enhanced Security for Arbor Login

We have fully rolled out Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) for Arbor. This means staff will need to enter a security code (like the text codes used for online banking) when logging in from outside the school network.

Improved Internet Reliability

Since the commissioning of our secondary internet line, we now regularly test our internet connection to ensure it remains stable and 'fail-overs' as expected. This has been added to our comprehensive routinely checks of our systems and processes.

Policies & Security

The **IT Acceptable Use & Cyber Security policy** remains current and does not require any updates. There have been **no cyber incidents** to report.

The Staff Well-Being Group is now well established and meets once every half term. Between 12-15 members of staff attend each meeting representing a wide range of roles and teams from across the school, both teaching and support staff.

Our most recent meeting focused on staff workspaces, and the outcomes were as follows:

- Two silent staff workspaces have been created for staff to be able to be able to work undisturbed. We have used two smaller classrooms which are only used minimally for timetabled lessons. Staff have made good use of these spaces since they were designated for this purpose and feedback has been very positive indeed.
- Opaque plastic film has been applied to the larger internal windows looking into staff rooms / main office from the corridors. Staff had previously fed back that these windows meant that they were effectively “on show” to students walking past all day, even when trying to eat their lunch etc. We have added the film to allow increased privacy for staff when working in staff rooms. This has also been very positively received.
- We are now putting on refreshments for staff in the library once per half-term at break time so that all staff can meet together and take a moment to catch up. In the absence of one large central staff room, staff usually do not get the opportunity to do this. When we trialled this as part of the World Book Day events, staff were very grateful for this chance, so we now intend to make this a regular arrangement.

Alongside the Staff Well-Being Group, we have also created more and more opportunities for the staff voice to be heard so that SLT can formulate action plans based on the views of staff on our strengths and areas for development, particularly relating to staff well-being.

Immediate action has already been taken to address some of the areas which have been highlighted in the staff surveys and Headteacher discussion groups. For example, as a result of staff expressing a desire for enhanced whole-school communication around our priorities, we have already launched two new staff bulletins: “The Headteacher’s Bulletin” and “The Inclusion Bulletin”. Both of these bulletins are circulated to staff weekly, and contain a huge amount of information around strategic vision, priorities, operational updates and opportunities for staff to make an impact.

We have also increased publicity around the Staff Recognition link on our website, which allows both parents and staff to formally acknowledge and commend the work of staff members when they have gone above and beyond to support students or colleagues. Staff nominated for this receive a formal letter of congratulation from the Headteacher along with some chocolates as a token of the school’s appreciation of their efforts.

Sickness Absence

Autumn Term comparison compared to the same period the previous year – Absence days

	Teaching staff days absence	Teaching staff days absence excluding long term absence*	Support staff days absence	Support staff days absence excluding long term absence*
2024	420	173	446	189
2023	325	190	438	229
Year on year difference	+95	-17	+8	-40

2024 absence includes ten members of staff with long term absence (4 for medical conditions, 1 for treatment, 1 bereavement, 1 for recovery after an operation and 3 for stress/anxiety). Seven members of staff have been supported back to work, three of which were in the spring term and four were before the end of the Autumn term. Three have left their employment (two in the Autumn term, one in the Spring term)

2023 absence includes seven members of staff with long term absence (2 for medical conditions, 1 for bereavement, 1 for treatment and 3 for stress)

Spring Half Term 1**Comparison compared to same period the previous year – Absence days**

	Teaching staff days absence	Teaching staff days absence excluding long term absence*	Support staff days absence	Support staff days absence excluding long term absence*
2025	161	129	118	62
2024	200	142	259	155
Year on year difference	-39	-13	-141	-93

2025 absence includes three members of staff with long term absence (2 for medical conditions and 1 for stress/anxiety). Two members of staff have returned to work and one has left their employment.

2024 absence included six staff members with long term absence (2 for treatment, 1 bereavement, 2 recovery from operations and 1 for medical). Five of those members of staff returned to work after a phased return.

*long term absence = over four weeks

Notes on stress/anxiety

A total of five employees have taken time off due to stress/anxiety since Autumn 2023 until Spring 2024 with some overlapping the different time periods. One is due to work related stress the others are for personal reasons.

The system for formal absence procedures is now firmly embedded.

There has been a wide range of activities that have taken place already. Neston High School hosted an IET Faraday event at school for Year 8 with our all-girls team winning on the day. We hope their score will get them into the national final in the summer term. The Enthuse STEM Learning Partnership, a two-year programme with local primary and secondary schools, will finish in April and Neston High School hosted the Design challenge and evening, with students and their parents when they all attended Thornton Hall for the award evening. Lavina (Y7) won KS3 first prize, with Rex (Y7) and Paige (Y8) taking joint third. We are also working with Chester Zoo, making a sleeping bag made from crisp packages with Y10



In addition to this, Makerspace have won the community prize for the best project with our Plastic recycling project, Mr Link won the Outstanding Conservation Educator 2024 from Chester Zoo, we finished the term of 2024 by winning Education Business Awards 2024 STEM and came second place at the Educate Awards for outstanding commitment to the environment.

Coming up we will be returning to the Unilever for 2025 STEM competition and in the summer, we are taking 14 Y7 students to the Big Bang in Birmingham.

I am pleased to present a report highlighting the continued success of literacy and reading initiatives at Neston High School, specifically focusing on the various programs and interventions that have been implemented for both 6th form and Key Stage 3 students. These initiatives have significantly contributed to fostering a strong reading culture within the school, and the impact is evident across the board in terms of student engagement and development in literacy.

Key Literacy Initiatives:

Weekly Literacy Intervention for 6th Form and Year 7 Students:

Our literacy intervention programme continues to be highly successful, with 6th Form and Year 7 students attending once a week. This initiative has been a crucial support mechanism for students, providing targeted assistance to those who need it most. Feedback from both students and teachers indicates that the intervention is highly valued, with many students reporting increased confidence and improved reading and writing skills as a result.

Small Reading Groups for KS3 Students:

In addition to the above, we have established small reading groups targeting KS3 students with lower literacy levels. These groups are led by a combination of English teachers, community volunteers, and our dedicated librarian, Claire Roberts. The collaborative nature of this programme has allowed for a more personalised approach, enabling students to receive tailored support during tutor time and scheduled intervention slots. The

results have been positive, with several students showing marked improvement in their reading comprehension and fluency.

HLTA – Literacy Lead:

Following the recent interview process, we have appointed Susan Amato as our new Higher Level Teaching Assistant who will now work with the English department to develop the reading proficiency of our students. This role will focus on boosting reading confidence and improving the phonics, reading, spelling and writing skills of students. Susan will plan and lead interventions whilst tracking and monitoring the progress of students.

World Book Day – 6th March 2025:

World Book Day 2025 was a resounding success, with numerous events designed to promote reading for pleasure and engage both staff and students in a fun and meaningful way. The events provided a fantastic platform for the school community to come together and celebrate the joy of reading.

Key highlights of World Book Day:

- **Pet Photo Competition:** Staff contributed a variety of delightful pet photos, with answers displayed on the screens for everyone to enjoy. The pet photo competition proved to be a fun and engaging way to spark conversations about books.
- **Library Social:** The 'Library Social' was well-attended by staff, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. We are now considering making these socials a regular fixture, potentially holding them multiple times per half term. These events offer an opportunity for staff to relax and catch up in a social setting, which strengthens the sense of community within the school.
- **Student Librarians:** Our team of student librarians continues to demonstrate exceptional commitment and responsibility. They assist in the daily running of the library, ensuring it remains a welcoming and well-organised space for all students. Their dedication is an integral part of the success of the literacy initiatives.
- **Dress-Up for Charity:** Sixth Form students showed their support for Blood Cancer by dressing up as part of a fundraising effort. The enthusiasm was infectious, and we are already considering department competitions for next year's event to make it even more competitive and fun.
- **Staff Contributions:** Many staff members participated in recording chapters for students to listen to during lessons, including the PE department, who made it happen even in a practical setting. Their involvement has been instrumental in bringing literature to life in innovative ways.
- **Book Bake-Off & Tutor Time Quiz:** The Book Bake-Off and the Tutor Time quiz also generated a lot of excitement. We are looking forward to announcing the winners next week and celebrating their creative contributions to the day.
- **Chef Shaun & Team:** A special mention must go to Chef Shaun and the catering team for their imaginative and delicious literary-themed menu. The food provided added another layer of fun to the day, bringing literature to the table in the most delightful way.



Staff Training/CPD Opportunities:

Recently, Stuart Smith led a highly successful training session for all staff focused on reading ages and the tracking and monitoring of students' reading abilities. This professional development opportunity was aimed at ensuring that staff have a thorough understanding of how to effectively track and support students' literacy progress. Stuart utilised internal data systems, specifically Go4Schools, to provide all staff with up-to-date reading data. This data is crucial for informing teaching, learning, and interventions. Staff feedback has been extremely positive, with many expressing gratitude for the useful refresher on how to use data effectively to inform their practice. This

session has empowered staff to tailor their teaching methods to better meet the literacy needs of our students and provide targeted interventions where necessary.

Anthony Walker Foundation: Literacy feedback

Anthony Walker Foundation's Feedback on Literacy Wall Art and Diversity Initiatives

The Anthony Walker Foundation has praised our school for the outstanding visual literacy initiatives displayed through our wall art, staircase book spines, and world reading map. These creative features were highlighted for their impressive contribution to promoting a culture of reading and celebrating diversity.

The Foundation commended the literacy wall art for its vibrant and engaging representation of literature, encouraging students to explore a variety of authors, genres, and cultural perspectives. The staircase book spines, each representing an iconic piece of literature, were particularly noted for their ability to create an immersive literary environment, sparking curiosity among students and fostering a love of reading. The world reading map was also lauded for its unique approach to highlighting global authors and stories from diverse cultures, providing students with a visual celebration of different voices and experiences.

Overall, the Anthony Walker Foundation recognised these initiatives as not only enhancing the school's literacy environment but also as a powerful tool in celebrating authors, culture, and diversity, which aligns with their mission to promote inclusivity and representation in all aspects of life.

The literacy and reading initiatives at Neston High School continue to have a significant and positive impact on our students. From the successful weekly literacy interventions to the fantastic celebrations of World Book Day, it is clear that our commitment to promoting reading for pleasure and improving literacy levels is yielding great results. The collaboration between staff, students, and the community has been outstanding, and we are excited to build on this momentum to continue promoting a strong reading culture.

Kirsty Cunningham
March 2025